

## A DISCUSSION ON CONSCIOUSNESS

> (Definition of Consciousness - the mental faculty in living beings which grasps and/or reacts to existence. Or, the faculty which is aware of its surroundings [its environs]).

### The Three Levels of Consciousness

1] The primary level is simple sensation or ***direct-sense experience*** involving one stimulus and one *automatic* response, or reflex, with no attendant memory of the event. This level is shared by all living entities, plant and animal. This is actually a pre-consciousness level as the living entities which possess this faculty only, and none of the additional levels listed below, have no mentality as such. Mentality is a rudimentary nervous system rather than having only the store of knowledge present in protein chains, RNA, and DNA.

2] The second level, that of the ***percept***, involves the addition of memory, which does reside in a mentality (a nervous system including a brain). The memory is of two or more connected-sense-experiences (several discrete beams of light, several discrete waves of sound, several discrete quantities of pressure, and so on; acting on an appropriately receptive sense organ) that form an *automatic* unit of cognition or impression such as sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell.

The perceptual faculty characteristically leads to the *awareness of things or entities*. All things that are perceived have *concrete existence* (exist in the physical universe - the realm of extension) rather than *abstract existence* (exist only in *human* consciousness as an idea which does not have the quality of extension). The perceptual is an *automatic* function. For example: open your eyes and you see, a noise is made and you cannot help but hear, or a pressure on your body is involuntarily felt, and so on. Because "memory" is a primary constituent of perception, rudimentary learning, or the integration of past experiences (through trial and error), is present at this stage. This level is shared by the so called higher animals with man.

3] The third level is ***conceptual***, or forming an abstract idea generalized from the memory of two or more perceptual instances which have been retained in memory as similar in one aspect or another (our ability to identify *universals*). These are the ideas having abstract existence which are mentioned in the previous paragraph. For example: a lily pad in a pond, a frog sitting on it, and other items of foliage in the area are all seen to display the same outer color; so, one aspect in which they have similarity (universality) is green – man pointedly *conceives* of "green or greenness". He forms a *concept* of the color green by connecting it with a symbol (a word) which can be spoken, written, or held as a thought. As a conceptual being can discern universals, he can also distinguish particulars, opposites, corollaries, and contrasts.

Another example: we have observed that the predatory animals, which have been man's companions through his tenure on earth, always have and still do hunt for their food. Man, who previously hunted and gathered exclusively, has, over that period of time, discovered the controlled means to raise his food by having the capacity to establish and act upon the complex concept of "agriculture". A concept is not simply a word, but the corollary *representative* of every thing, attribute, action, and relationship

for which it stands. Said another way but in the same sequence, a word/concept is either a noun, adjective, verb, or a prepositional phrase.

The "basic" power in this attribute is to abstractly integrate from percepts, such as fashioning the primary tools of the mind: descriptive word/concepts (e.g., green) without which reasoned *thinking* cannot occur - that is, we identify an observed thing, attribute, etc., etc., with symbols like letters, numbers, hieroglyphs, gestures, organized sounds, and so forth. It must be emphasized that words are used not only for communication, but also for the process of rational thought. Conceptual thinking *requires* words!

The "greater" power is the ability to build other concepts from previously established concepts. In other words, to garner further abstractions from abstractions themselves - such as forming the high level abstraction of "agriculture" as including the lower level constituents of raising food, namely agronomy and animal husbandry. This is the same process in which the higher level concept of "furniture" encompasses the lower level concepts of chairs, tables, beds, etc. Another way this greater power is applied is in connecting concepts to form sentences, sentences to form paragraphs, and paragraphs to form fully integrated literary or mathematical discourses.

Said alternatively, we form a hierarchical thought edifice built upon a foundation of observation (percepts), to the "idea" of connecting those observations with low-level abstract symbols like *words* (concepts), and, lastly, to grammatically combine a number of concepts to form high-level, *complete* thoughts (sentences and propositions).

Through concentrated mental imagery, it is possible for actions and relationships to be modeled *before* they happen. This level requires the exercise of free-will or volitional effort (often a great amount of effort! ) . . . it must be focused upon . . . it is *non-automatic*. Conceptual consciousness is pro-active rather than reactive, as are direct-sense and perceptual consciousness'. This "pro-activity" is the engine which propels human development forward at an ever increasing rate.

The conceptual faculty characteristically leads to *self-awareness*, or consciousness of one's own consciousness. The name for humans in Anthropology is homo-sapien-sapiens. The 'sapien-sapiens' in the classification refers to a being aware of itself, that is, selfawareness. In some other circles this is termed the Fourth Level Consciousness which evolves from the following process: [1] Mineral Consciousness; [2] Vegetable (Plant) Consciousness; [3] Animal and Bicameral Consciousness\* and, presently, to [4] Self Consciousness. Speculation is that the level yet to come is [5] Unitary/Cosmic Consciousness, or, at times, in the Western Tradition - Christ Consciousness.

(The lack of awareness, differentiation, and definition of these three modes of cognition, especially that of the *conceptual*, is what has led man to virtually all of his confused states of being.)

These are elusive, abstract topics to comprehend. Here are some restatements of what was presented above which might help bring clarification.

**Perception** (observation; the use of our five instruments of knowledge, our senses), is the *basic* state of human cognition; the memory of several instances of awareness

constituting experience and, finally, the ability to learn or associate through memory from experience.

**Conception** involves thinking or *creating* associations themselves by symbolizing experiences and consolidating or integrating these associations in various novel combinations which have never been experienced as such.

*Reason*: the faculty which integrates our perceptions (data provided by our **senses**) by means of forming conceptions. This raises our knowledge from the perceptual level, which we share with the animals, to the **conceptual** (abstractive) level which we alone have been observed to have attained. The method which reason employs in this process is ***the integrated Trivium***.

1] Through sense observation, form concepts and complete propositions from raw data in a discursive or grammatical manner to form a factual body-of-knowledge.

2] Subject that organized, factual body to the rules of logic for the elimination of all contradictions within its content and; thus, yield valid understanding.

3] Test this validity through cogent expression (forceful conviction) to one's self or, better yet, persuade another party as to one's conclusion via the rules of rhetoric. Since each of these elements is based on the facts of reality, the conclusions reached by a process of reason are objective and consistent with reality; hence, accessible to all men, the *rational animals*.

Finding the root of the concept *rational* - **ratio** - might offer additional clarification. Man is literally the animal that can discern, understand and use *ratios* or proportions. This is the most concise definition of "man", his reasoning ability, and all this implies. It speaks eloquently to the refined subtlety of which we are capable. The first realization of ratio was in identifying causality - or the Law of Cause and Effect. For every cause there is exactly one effect, for every effect there is exactly one cause . . . this is the Prime Ratio, the ratio of 1:1. From this beginning, observations led to all of the other ratios which we use: the octave and its various divisions in music and astronomy; the ratios of Pi and Phi (the Golden Ratio); the Pythagorean Theorem and Fibonacci Sequence in science, engineering, and the plastic arts, etc. Birds fly, fish swim, men discover and use ratio.

From the Western, Abrahamic Traditions:

In the time before Eve, when Adam was alone in the Garden of Eden except for the animals and vegetation, God is said to have tested him with a question. "What impressions do you have of your companions in the Garden, Adam?" Adam replied, "I see all about that which is like me, but I see nothing about which is anything like me." The test was successfully answered because Adam recognized the living entities, like himself, all around, but that he was the only entity he could observe which was aware of itself and, by implication, of the great magnitude and proportion of that difference. He had expressed the wider scale of awareness, not only of *kind*, but also of *degree*. Thus, as the story goes, God granted him the company of Eve to help spread this quality in the Garden. This is the quality of Grace, the quality of conceptual thought, that all persons

have inherited; and, it is important to add, of which each is free to cultivate and use... or not.